



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

New to the Road

Global Road Safety Week, May 8-14, 2017

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[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Ms. Simmons] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Latoya Simmons.

Getting a driver's license is often a landmark occasion in a young person's life. For these new drivers, learning to operate a car safely and responsibly can be a matter of life or death.

Dr. Erica Spies is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. She's joining us today to discuss the ways to improve safety on the road, particularly for new young drivers. Welcome to the show, Dr. Spies.

[Dr. Spies] Thanks, Latoya. Thank you for having me.

[Ms. Simmons] Dr. Spies, how many people are killed or seriously injured in motor-vehicle crashes each year?

[Dr. Spies] Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of injury and death in the United States. In 2015, over 35,000 people were killed in motor vehicle crashes—an average of 96 people per day. An estimated 2.4 million people were also injured in motor vehicle crashes the same year.

[Ms. Simmons] Do these occur more frequently among any particular sex or age group?

[Dr. Spies] The risk of motor vehicle crashes is higher among 16 to 19 year olds. Per mile driven, teen drivers are three times more likely than drivers ages 20 and older to be in a fatal crash. This is the leading cause of death among this age group. Over 2300 teens between the ages of 16 and 19 were killed in motor vehicle crashes in 2015. This means six teens die every day. Among teen drivers, those especially at risk are males.

[Ms. Simmons] What are the most common causes of motor-vehicle crashes among young drivers?

[Dr. Spies] There are several things that put teen drivers at risk. The eight danger zones for teens are driver inexperience, driving with teen passengers, nighttime driving, not using seat belts, distracted driving, drowsy driving, reckless driving, and impaired driving.

[Ms. Simmons] What can local leaders and policy makers do to improve driver safety?

[Dr. Spies] There are many proven prevention strategies that states can implement and enforce to improve motor vehicle safety. State policy makers, community partners, and health care providers can all play a role. For teens, states can use CDC's Graduated Driver Licensing

Planning Guide to assess, develop, and implement plans to strengthen graduated driver licensing practices. States can also review and evaluate the status of their graduated driver licensing policies using CDC's prevention status reports. For all drivers, state policy makers can use CDC's Motor Vehicle Prioritizing Interventions and Cost Calculator to select effective motor vehicle injury prevention interventions. Community partners can play an important role in keeping teens safe on the road through displaying messages and hosting events that raise awareness about safe teen driving. And health care providers can give patients resources about motor vehicle safety and remind them how important it is to use their seat belt on every trip.

[Ms. Simmons] Give parents some strategies to help their children be safer drivers.

[Dr. Spies] Here's what you can do to help keep your teen safe on the road. First, model good driving habits—slow down, never drink and drive or drive distracted, and always buckle up. Next, discuss the rules on the road with your teen—why they are important to follow and the consequences for breaking them. And last, create a parent-teen driving agreement that puts these rules in writing to set clear expectations and limits.

[Ms. Simmons] Where can listeners get more information about driver safety?

[Dr. Spies] Parents can learn more about keeping their teen safe on the road at cdc.gov/parentsarethekey.

[Ms. Simmons] I've been talking today with Dr. Erica Spies about ways to improve road safety, particularly among new young drivers. Parents, talk to your children about the dangers of speeding and distractions, such as texting and adjusting the radio. The best way to convey good driving habits is to model them in front of your children.

Until next time, be well. This is Latoya Simmons for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.